

# Globalization's Impact on Cross-National Trends in the Age of First Marriage and Never Marrying

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## **Background**

The Second Demographic Transition has cross-nationally been characterized by increases in the mean age of first marriage as well as growing proportions of individuals remaining single since the 1960s (Lesthaeghe 2010). Beyond the contribution that late marriage and non-marriage make to well-documented sub-replacement fertility levels, research suggests that inter-personal relationships and identity creation are being revolutionized in a new context of increasingly unfettered options for union formation, sexual behavior, and the pursuit of individualism (Lesthaeghe 2010; Giddens 1999). Cross-national empirical research has demonstrated that gender-related educational and economic restructuring have significantly contributed to these trends for both men and women (Esping-Andersen 2009; Blossfeld 1995). Strong, positive correlations exist between increased education and income and the likelihood of marriage, and late marriage at that (Kalmijn 2007; Schwartz and Mare 2005; Sweeney 2002). However, research to date has not comparatively accounted for how these trends may be tied to greater and varying cross-national phenomena such as international economic, social, and political integration, i.e. globalization (Kalmijn 2007).

Contextualizing national economic and educational achievement of individuals within a broader context of international economic, political, and social change allows cross-national variability regarding marriage timing and never marrying to become more salient. Indeed, the pressing question remains as to why individuals of varying educational levels within a given country, on average, marry later than individuals of matching educational levels in other countries, net of other variables.

## **Research Question**

Working with the definition of globalization as the process of creating networks of connection through the fast and easy transport of people, ideas, technology, and money, this investigation

hypothesizes that increased exposure to networks, money, and ideas presents a context for renegotiating lifestyle decisions, and exacerbates already existing trends with regards to marriage timing. In this paper I investigate the association between a country's level of economic, political, and social globalization and first marriage timing, or never marrying, across educational groups for individuals in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

### **Data and Measures**

I use the KOF Swiss Economic Institute's Globalization Indices as my primary independent variables. Based on data provided by the World Bank, UNESCO, and independent researchers, the indices measure a) economic globalization through data on capital flows and restrictions, b) social globalization through international call traffic, tourism, and internet and tv access, c) political globalization based on involvement in UN peace-keeping missions and international treaty involvement. Regarding the individual level data, the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) dataset is a cross-sectional panel study of individuals aged 50 and older and includes extensive, detailed information on educational and marriage histories. The educational level variables (standardized across countries) will be interacted with the globalization level variables. Fixed-effects, nested binomial logistic regression models analyze men and women separately. The initial outcome variable is married v. never married and from the group that married, the next outcome variable is early marriage v. late marriage.

### **Preliminary Results:**

Preliminary results demonstrate that increased educational attainment increases the odds of never marrying for women, and for those men and women that do marry, it increases the odds of late marriage, very largely for women in particular. In support of my hypothesis, net of all educational levels, globalization increases the odds of never marrying for men and increases the odds of late marriage for men and women. Similarly, the interaction terms between globalization level and

educational levels do not prove significant, indicating that globalization's effect on marriage timing and never marrying may be uniform across educational levels within a given country.

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